

Social media platforms have become an integral part of our online daily lives and a great way to stay connected with others. They allow us to provide information and offer some type of communication (forums, chat rooms, email, instant messages, etc.) to connect with other users, are valuable tools for business and are being used now more than ever.

With the good comes the bad. The internet gives a false sense of security and anonymity, so it's easy to overshare information - sensitive information. The value it brings makes it easy to overlook the risks like the threat of criminal activity, such as stalking, bullying, identity theft, and hacking.

Make the best of the benefits social media can bring, but understand and follow these basic safety tips to avoid the risks:

- **Be Cautious of Sharing Too Much:** The more information you post, the easier it may be for a hacker or someone else to use that information to steal your identity, access your data or commit other crimes such as stalking. Never reveal your date and place of birth, home address or phone numbers.



- **Adjust Privacy Settings:** Learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks. They are there to help you control who sees what you post and manage your online experience in a positive way.
- **Know Who You Are Connected With:** Use your personal profile to keep your real friends (the ones you know and trust) up to date with your daily life. If you're uncertain of the authenticity of a friend account, verify it. False accounts may be set up for the purpose of sending people to malicious sites or with the intent of committing fraud.
- **Don't Share Personal Life Details:** If you use in-the-moment activities type of websites, you may be sharing too much. These are visible to almost everyone and reveal information that could alert criminals to your whereabouts or actions. You shouldn't share where you're vacationing, shopping, or traveling while you're gone. Never post when you expect to leave or return home.
- **Check Out Your Own Account:** To ensure the security of your account try searching for your profile while you're logged out. This will let you know what others are able to view, and see if there are any false accounts set up your name.
- **Control What Information is Shared with Outside Sources:** When you join a social networking site, reading the site's Privacy Policy and Terms of Use on the platform will explain exactly how private information is used and stored.
- **Remember** to keep your security and OS **software current**, use **strong passwords**, and that **what you post online-stays online**.